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ABSTRACT

These two documents present (1) a user's guide to the Personal Teaching Improvement Guides Program developed at the University of California, Berkeley and (2) a sample guide. The program uses results of student evaluations (keyed to 24 teaching practices) and descriptions of successful teaching practices to individualize instructional improvement for each faculty member. Provided are instructions for the eight steps needed to implement the program including recruiting faculty members or departments, administering the student questionnaires, generating teacher description profiles, and assembling and distributing the Personal Teaching Improvement Guides for areas rated weak by students. The sample includes the student evaluation results and four "teaching improvement packets" in the specific areas identified by the student evaluations as weak. It includes a guide for their use, a worksheet to encourage specific improvement planning by instructors, and the specific ideas (obtained from interviews with Berkeley teachers rated highly by their students). The sample teaching improvement packets cover: knowing if the class is understanding you or not; having an interesting style of presentation; motivating students to do their best work; and giving interesting and stimulating assignments. (DB)

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5/23/Draft

THE PERSONAL TEACHING IMPROVEMENT GUIDES PROGRAM

A USER'S MANUAL

Robert C. Wilson
Chief, Research on Teaching
Improvement and Evaluation

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California
May 1987

HE025 395

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Acknowledgements

We are indebted to the many Berkeley faculty who described to us the successful things they do in their teaching (Wilson, 1986a). We also wish to thank the many Berkeley faculty who participated in the research studies which tested and shaped the present versions of our Department Teaching Improvement Program. The Student Description of Teaching, the Personal Teaching Improvement Guides, and the Library of Teaching Improvement Packets have been used in several action-research studies in which faculty participated as co-experimenters to test various methods of enabling them to improve their teaching.

This project was supported principally by the Council on Educational Development and by the Vice-Chancellor for Undergraduate Affairs, Watson M. Laetsch, University of California, Berkeley. Partial support was received from the Office of the President of the University of California.

May 1987

Introduction

This user's manual is designed to help readers construct and use a program of Personal Teaching Improvement Guides to facilitate college and university faculty members in making worthwhile changes in their teaching. It is of particular interest to faculty development people and others with programatic concerns about the quality of teaching in higher education. It is of direct interest to faculty members in that they are the ones who are the final arbiters of whether changes are made in their teaching.

What Personal Teaching Improvement Guides are:

> Personal Teaching Improvment Guides (Wilson, 1986c) are an inexpensive, but effective, means of enabling faculty to give substance and specificity to their efforts to improve their teaching. Tailor-made for individual faculty members, they use their 24 item student evaluations of teaching as a starting point. They include descriptions of successful teaching practices which are matched with a teacher's lowest-rated items. They are a means of supplying faculty with simple relevant ideas they can use to improve their teaching.

Summary of the Steps for Implementing the Personal Teaching Improvement Guides Program

1. Recruit individual faculty members or departments to participate in an experimental project to improve teaching.
2. Administer Student Description of Teaching questionnaires in the classes of participating teachers.
3. Generate Individual Teacher Description Profiles which summarize and display the means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions of students' descriptions of teaching in particular classes.
4. Examine, interpret and mark Teacher's profiles in preparation for assembling Personal Teaching Improvement Guides (PTIGs).
5. Assemble PTIGs for participating faculty by selecting Teaching Improvement Packets (TIPs) that correspond to their lowest rated questionnaire items.
6. Distribute Personal Teaching Improvement Guides to faculty during the second week of the following academic term.
7. Encourage faculty to give concreteness to improving the quality of their teaching by using or adapting the TIPs.
8. Ask participating teachers to report on their use, if any, of their PTIG toward the end of the term.

1. Recruiting Faculty

We have recruited faculty participation by invitation, and have used several approaches at different times:

1) Invitations have been sent directly to selected groups of teachers;

2) We have sent memos to department chairs asking them to announce to their faculty the availability of help with their teaching through participation in our research.

Two sample memos are presented in Appendix A.

2. Student Evaluation of Teaching

The principal criticism of student evaluations of teaching by many faculty is that they don't help faculty to improve their teaching. One of the purposes of the Personal Teaching Improvement Guides is to overcome that criticism. That is, to use student evaluations of teaching in ways that do improve teaching.

The particular student evaluation of teaching form that is used in this procedure is the Student Description of Teaching (SDT) questionaire (Wilson, 1986b). A typescript copy is presented in Appendix B. A machine-scored version of the SDT is included as item 3 in the Sample PTIG. The SDT differs from most other student evaluation forms in several ways.

The Student Description of Teaching questionnaire presents 24 statements describing particular teaching tasks, e.g., "Explains clearly", "Is accessible to students", "Encourages class discussion". Students are asked to rate the descriptiveness of each statement about the teaching in

their class. They are asked to make their ratings on a five-point scale where 1 means "not at all descriptive" and 5 means "very descriptive." Particular emphasis is placed on a sixth category of response, "NA". Students are told to mark this response if a statement doesn't apply to the teaching in their class or if they don't know how applicable it is. They are told that they are expected to use the "NA" category; that the SDT questionnaire is designed to be used in a wide variety of classes; that not all statements will be relevant to the teaching in their class. Instructions for administering the SDT are included as Appendix C.

The 24-statement 1986 edition of the SDT questionnaire is adapted from the 36-item questionnaire developed in a three-year task-analysis, factor-analysis and cross-validation study carried out during 1968 to 1970 (Hildebrand, M., Wilson, R. C., and Dienst E. 1971). The judgement task posed to students is that of deciding along the dimension of descriptiveness. They are asked how descriptive each statement is of the teaching in a particular teaching situation or class. Students are not asked to make judgements along the dimensions of good- bad, excellent-poor, effective-ineffective. Such judgements are more complex psychometric tasks than judgements of descriptiveness. They are better left to a second level of judges, administrators or faculty who have a larger context within which to make judgements about the value of such teaching behavior as "Emphasizes conceptual understanding," "Has students apply concepts to demonstrate understanding," for instance.

3. Generating Individual Teacher Description Profiles

Giving faculty data on students' views of their teaching in a form that is

informative of the data's meanings and implications is important in enabling faculty to improve their teaching.

Every Personal Teaching Improvement Guide includes an Individual Teacher Description Profile. The profiles display the means, standard deviations and frequency distributions of student descriptions of the teaching in a class. An example is included in the Sample PTIG.

4. Marking the Individual Teacher Description Profiles

These profiles are examined and marked by an "intervener" who mediates between the raw data from students and the faculty members who are the potential "actors" in making changes in their teaching. The "interveners" follow explicit rules which lead to the selection of particular Teaching Improvement Packets(TIPs). The rules are presented in the Interpretation Guide included in the Sample PTIG.

5. Assembling Personal Teaching Improvement Guides (PTIGs)

A detailed description of instructions for assembling Personal Teaching Improvement Guides is presented in Appendix D.

Statements about teaching behaviors for which the average rating of students is lowest are of special concern to "interveners." These are the statements which students rated as least descriptive of teaching in their class.

"Interveners" select from a Library of 24 Teaching Improvement Packets, (Wilson, 1986d), the four TIPs corresponding to the four statements about

teaching that students have rated as least descriptive.

Not knowing what to do to improve their teaching is seen by many faculty as a major obstacle to the improvement of their teaching. The Teaching Improvement Packets Library includes a range of successful ideas from which "interveners" can select. As mentioned earlier, there are 24 TIPs. These correspond to the 24 Student Description of Teaching statements. Examples of these are included in the Sample PTIG.

6. Distributing Personal Teaching Improvement Guides

We believe that faculty use the PTIGs most effectively when they receive them early in the term following the student evaluation. This encourages faculty members to incorporate ideas included in the Teaching Improvement Packets into their teaching. The beginning of the term is a time when they are eager to make their new classes successful. We have found that in most departments the second week of the new term is a good time to distribute the PTIGs.

7. Encouraging Faculty to Use their Personal Teaching Improvement Guides (PTIGs)

The ideas in the PTIGs consist of concrete activities which faculty members can easily test by incorporating them into their teaching. Teachers can tell students that they are trying out a new idea and invite them to evaluate the idea at the end of class.

In order to encourage faculty members to engage in such experimentation with their teaching, we have included an Instructional Improvement Worksheet. The worksheet gives faculty members a place to record their efforts to improve teaching. The worksheets can be used by faculty members in the academic advancement process as a way of documenting their efforts to improve instruction.

8. Assessing Faculty Satisfaction with the Personal Teaching Improvement Guides and their Use of the Teaching Improvement Packets

Two kinds of assessment information are useful in reporting to faculty members and Department Chairs on the degree of success of the Personal Teaching Improvement Guide process. In deciding whether to continue the process, departments are usually interested in the degree of faculty satisfaction with their PTIG and TIPs. They are also interested in the degree of faculty use of the PTIG and TIPs.

References

Davis, B. G., Wood, L., & Wilson, R. C. (1986). The Library of Teaching Improvement Packets: 24 Item Edition (for Preparing Personal Teaching Improvement Guides): Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services, University of California, Berkeley.

Hildebrand, M., Wilson, R. C., & Dienst, E. R. (1971) Evaluating University Teaching. Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley.

Wilson, R. C., (1986a). Improving Faculty Teaching: Effective Use of Student Evaluations and Consultants. Journal of Higher Education, 57, 197-211.

Wilson, R. C., (1986b). Student Description of Teaching (A Questionnaire: The 24 Item Edition). Research on Teaching Improvement and Evaluation/ Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services, University of California, Berkeley.

Wilson, R. C., (1986c). A Berkeley Personal Teaching Improvement Guide: 24 Item Edition (Sample Copy). Research on Teaching Improvement and Evaluation/Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services, University of California, Berkeley.

Information on Use

It is our hope that there will be wide use of the Personal Teaching Improvement Guides, the Teaching Improvement Packets and the Student Description of Teaching questionnaires. They may be freely reproduced with acknowledgment of the source.

Inquiries should be directed to:

Robert C. Wilson
Chief, Research on Teaching
Improvement and Evaluation/TIES
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California, 94720

(415)-642-1811
(415)-548-4667

APPENDICES

A. INVITATION LETTERS

B. STUDENT DESCRIPTION OF TEACHING (SDT)

C. INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING THE STUDENT DESCRIPTION OF TEACHING (SDT)

D. INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSEMBLING A PERSONAL TEACHING IMPROVEMENT GUIDE (PTIG)

BERKELEY: RESEARCH ON TEACHING IMPROVEMENT AND EVALUATION
TEACHING INNOVATION AND EVALUATION SERVICES
2-1811

APPENDIX A-1

October 10, 1986

&PROFESSOR/O&
Chairman
&DEPARTMENT/O&
Campus

Dear &SALUTATION/O&:

This Fall and Spring we will be conducting a research project to study the effectiveness of a promising procedure for documenting and improving teaching. Last year we pretested it with the School of Business Administration and Department of Landscape Architecture.

We would like to invite your department to participate in the research phase of this project. We plan to involve faculty from 12 departments who teach courses of various sizes, levels, and types. The project involves:

1. Administering Student Description of Teaching questionaires at the end of Fall and Spring semesters.

2. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of faculty members' teaching.

3. Preparing Personalized Teaching Guides that include successful teaching ideas selected for individual faculty members. (See enclosed sample).

The ultimate aim of the project is to test the efficacy of the evaluation process and the pool of suggested good teaching practices in improving teaching. All costs are charged to the research project.

Please return the attached form or call me at 2-1811 to let me know your response by October 29, if possible.

Best wishes in your work,

Bob Wilson

Robert C. Wilson
Research Psychologist

Encl.

APPENDIX A-2

TO: Robert C. Wilson, Chief of Research
Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services (TIES)
262 Stephens
Campus

FROM: _____

DEPARTMENT: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

_____ I am interested in learning more about how your research project can be used to document and improve teaching.

Please call for an appointment.

The best times to reach me are:

Day of the week: _____

Hours: _____

_____ I doubt that our whole department would want to participate but I would like to make it available for interested faculty.

_____ Our department is satisfied with its present teaching evaluation practices.

Comments:

BERKELEY: RESEARCH ON TEACHING IMPROVEMENT AND EVALUATION/
TEACHING INNOVATION AND EVALUATION SERVICES
2-1811

APPENDIX A-3

November 5, 1986

Dear Colleague:

TIES is conducting a research project to study the effectiveness of a promising procedure for documenting and improving teaching. It was pretested last year with the School of Business Administration and Department of Landscape Architecture.

We would like to invite your department to participate in the research phase of this project. We plan to involve 10 faculty from each of 12 departments who teach courses of various sizes, levels, and types.

The project involves:

1. Administering Student Description of Teaching questionaires at the end of Fall and Spring semesters (about 10-15 minutes)(attached).

2. Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of faculty members' teaching. (sample profile attached)

3. Preparing Personal Teaching Guides that include successful teaching ideas selected for individual faculty members. (sample Teaching Idea Packet attached).

The ultimate aim of the project is to test the efficacy of the evaluation process and the pool of suggested good teaching practices in improving teaching. All costs are charged to the research project. Results are confidential.

Please inform your department chairman by November 19, if you would like to participate.

Best wishes in your work,

Bob Wilson

Robert C. Wilson
Research Psychologist

Encl.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT DESCRIPTION OF TEACHING

Department _____ Instructor _____

Course Number _____ _____ Semester, 19___

The following items reflect some of the ways teachers can be described. Please circle the number which indicates the degree to which you feel each item describes the instructor named above.

IF YOU HAVE NO INFORMATION OR FEEL AN ITEM DOES NOT APPLY, CIRCLE N/A.

Responses will not be returned to the instructor until after final grades have been given.

USE NO. 2 PENCIL ONLY

• ERASE COMPLETELY TO CHANGE

		Not at all Descriptive				Very Descriptive	N/A
1.	Discusses points of view other than his/her own.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
2.	Discusses recent developments in the field.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3.	Emphasizes conceptual understanding.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
4.	Explains clearly.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
5.	Is well prepared.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
6.	Gives lectures that are easy to outline.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7.	Summarizes major points.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8.	States objectives for each class session.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
9.	Identifies what he/she considers important.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10.	Encourages class discussion.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
11.	Invites students to share their knowledge and experiences.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
12.	Knows if the class is understanding him/her or not...	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
13.	Has students apply concepts to demonstrate understanding.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
14.	Shows genuine interest in students.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
15.	Gives personal help to students having difficulties in course.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
16.	Relates to students as individuals.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
17.	Is accessible to students out of class.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
18.	Has an interesting style of presentation.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19.	Varies the speed and tone of his/her voice.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
20.	Shows interest and concern for the quality of his/her teaching.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
21.	Motivates students to do their best work.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
22.	Gives interesting and stimulating assignments.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
23.	Gives examinations permitting students to show understanding.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
24.	Keeps students informed of their progress.....	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

(turn page)

II. 1. Considering both the limitations and possibilities of the subject matter and course, how would you rate the overall teaching effectiveness of this instructor?

Not at all effective			Moderately effective			Extremely effective
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Focusing now on the course content, how worthwhile was this course in comparison with others you have taken at this University?

Not at all worthwhile			Moderately worthwhile			Extremely worthwhile
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

III. Are you taking this course because it is required?

(1) _____ YES (2) _____ No

IV. COMMENTS:

1. Please use this space to identify what you perceive as the real strengths and weaknesses of:

a) the course

b) the instructor's teaching

2. What improvements would you suggest?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING THE STUDENT DESCRIPTION OF TEACHING (SDT)

Preparation:

- Check class enrollment and make sure you have enough forms.
- Bring a supply of sharpened number 2 pencils, with erasers.
- Reserve the last 10 minutes of the class for the SDT administration.
- Have a large envelope to put the forms in, clearly labeled with the instructor's name, the course number, and the semester.

Administration:

- Explain to the class that they are being asked to fill out a teaching evaluation questionnaire. Emphasize the importance of thoughtful and constructive responses which will help the instructor become a more effective teacher. Remind them that other students will benefit from their efforts.
- Explain the department's procedure for when and in what form the instructor will receive these forms and their results. Student response will be more forthcoming if the instructor sees their comments and scores only after grades have been turned in. It is best if the instructor leave the room while students fill out the forms.
- Tell the students that they need to use number 2 pencils and ask for a show of hands to see who needs to borrow one.
- Pass out the forms and pencils. If the class is large, enlist the help of TAs or students.
- Point out features of the SDT form:
  - the 5 point scale for evaluating the instructor's teaching;
  - the N/A column for items that are not applicable or that students do not know;
  - the open-ended questions on the back of the form; these are very important.
- Remind the class that every question must be answered or the scoring will not work, to fill in the boxes neatly and completely, and not to make other marks outside the boxes.

Returning the Forms:

- Collect the SDT forms and pencils, and separate the used and unused forms.
- Put the used forms in the envelope, and return it immediately to the department office, along with the unused forms and pencils.

Appendix D: Instructions for Assembling a Personal Teaching Improvement Guide (PTIG)

A. Marking the Individual Teacher Description Profile:

1) Find those items that were omitted by at least 25% of the class and draw a line through the item numbers and through the average response to them. These are probably not relevant or students don't know the answer to these questions.
2) Circle the two highest average responses. If there are two items tied for second place, circle both of them so that a total of three items are circled.
3) Draw boxes around the four lowest average responses and item numbers. Again if items are tied, you may end up with more than four. TIPs will be sent to faculty for all the boxed items.

B. Assembling the Materials:

1) Check the number of respondents to the Student Description of Teaching which appears in the upper right hand corner of the Individual Teacher Description Profile. If the number of respondents is less than six, the Profile should not be evaluated because of the small size of the sample. In these cases a Personal Teaching Improvement Guide should be assembled which includes the cover page, a memo explaining that the class could not be evaluated because of the small size, and the three most popular teaching tips (i.e Giving lectures that are easy to outline, Knowing if the class is understanding you, Having an interesting style of presentation).
2) If the number of respondents is less than 15 but greater than six, a Personal Teaching Improvement Guide may be assembled but a cautionary memo should be stapled onto the profile in the upper left hand corner.
3) Include one marked copy of the faculty member's profile, together with TIPs that correspond to the four lowest rated items.
4) The profile should be accompanied by the information sheet: "Individual Teacher Description Profile Interpretation Guide", and the TIPs by the sheet "Teaching Improvement Packets: Guide for Their Use," and "Instructional Improvement Worksheet."
5) It is helpful to the faculty member if a summary of the students' comments to the open-ended questions is enclosed.
6) It is useful to acknowledge those faculty members who received scores higher than 6.0 for Overall Teaching Effectiveness rating. The chairperson of the department can write a few words of congratulations on the cover memo.

C. Arranging the Materials:

1) The PTIG material should be arranged in the following order (from top to bottom):
   a. Cover page (with faculty member's name hand written on front),
   b. Memo from chair of the department (as originator of PTIG),
   c. Interpretation Guide,
   d. Individual Teacher Description Profile,
   e. Student Description of Teaching,
   f. Guide for use of Teaching Improvement Packets,
   g. Teaching Improvement Worksheet,
   h. TIPs which correspond to the least descriptive items.
2) Paper clip all materials together in the upper left hand corner.

D. Double checking the quality of the Personal Teaching Improvement Guides (PTIG's):

1) Before distributing the PTIG's to faculty it is a good idea to have someone other than the person who has assembled the PTIG's verify that all materials are included and are arranged in the proper order.
2) Some things to verify:
   a. Is the faculty member's name on the cover page?
   b. Is the profile readable?
   c. Are the boxed items the faculty member's four lowest average responses?
   d. Are the circled items the faculty member's two highest average responses?
   e. Are the TIPs included in the packet matched with the faculty member's four lowest average responses?
   f. Are memos included for classes with only 6 - 15 respondents and for classes with under 6 respondents?
   g. Has the chairperson written a separate acknowledgement for those faculty members who scored higher than 6.0 on overall teaching effectiveness.

A Berkeley
Personal Teaching Improvement Guide

Professor SAMPLE
Spring 1987

Robert C. Wilson
Research on Teaching Improvement and Evaluation
Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services (TIES)
University of California, Berkeley
1986

Sponsored by tne
Council on Educational Development

BERKELEY: RESEARCH ON TEACHING IMPROVEMENT AND EVALUATION/
TEACHING INNOVATION AND EVALUATION SERVICES
2-1811

May 26, 1987

Dear Colleague:

One of the most cogent criticisms of student evaluations of teaching is that they don't improve teaching.

The attached Personal Teaching Improvement Guide (PTIG) has been assembled from the TIES Student Description of Teaching questionnaires which your students filled out last semester. The guide can enable you to experiment with something new in your teaching, should you wish to do so. Included are:

-- a marked copy of your Individual Teacher Description Profile which can help you decide what to change;

-- four Teaching Improvement Packets (TIPs) which can help you decide on some new things to try. The TIPs are matched to your lowest rated items.

The Teaching Improvement Packets (TIPs) include ideas from successful teachers at Berkeley. Some of the teaching ideas may not be relevant to your current teaching. If you would like TIPs for other aspects of teaching, they are available from my office.

If you do decide to experiment with your teaching, be sure to note it in your annual supplement to the bio-bibliography. It can be included under item 3, systematic efforts undertaken to improve instruction.

I am sending you this guide as part of a joint project between TIES and your department. I hope you will help us evaluate the Personal Teaching Improvement Guide (PTIG) at the end of the semester.

Best wishes in your work,

Bob Wilson

Robert C. Wilson
Chief, Research on Teaching
Innovation and Evaluation

Individual Teacher Description Profile

Interpretation Guide

This profile was generated from data collected in your class during the fifteenth week of last semester. Students filled out the Student Description of Teaching and responded to statements 1-24 shown on the printout.

1. Note those items with a large "omit" rate, very likely they are inappropriate for describing your class. We have crossed out items omitted by 25% of the respondents.

2. Note the items that have the highest average response. These are items that students say are most descriptive of your teaching in this class. Two of them have been circled. Are they consistent with your philosophy of teaching and objectives for the course ?

   It is important to remember that even though these items and scales were developed out of research on effective university teaching, a "low" or "high" score on any given item cannot be interpreted as indicative of "good" or "bad" teaching per se; the meaning of any item or scale score can only be interpreted in light of such factors as your own objectives for the course, the nature of the content and the kind of course.

3. Note the items that have the lowest average response. These are items that students say are least characteristic of your teaching in this class. Four of them have a box drawn around them. Some of these items may be things that are not appropriate to do anything about. Other low items may reflect aspects of your teaching you would like to change. If so, turn to the enclosed Teaching Improvement Packets.

4. Note the class size. When there are fewer than about 15 students who complete the questionnaire, the results are unreliable, and should be taken with a grain of salt.

5/87

FALL 1983 INDIVIDUAL TEACHER DESCRIPTION PROFILE 35 Respondents out of 40 Enrolled (87.5%)

	ITEMS	FREQUENCIES							
	THE INSTRUCTOR:	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[NA]	Average	Std. Dev
1	Discusses points of view other than his/her own.	0	3	15	11	4	2	3.5	0.8
2	Discusses recent developments in the field	2	1	14	12	5	1	3.5	1.0
3	Emphasizes conceptual understanding.	0	3	8	14	9	1	(3.9)	0.9
4	Explains clearly	2	4	8	13	7	1	3.6	1.2
5	Is well prepared	0	0	7	16	11	1	(4.1)	0.7
6	Gives lectures that are easy to outline.	4	5	6	14	5	1	3.3	1.3
7	Summarizes major points.	3	3	8	14	6	1	3.5	1.2
8	States objectives for each class session	1	7	11	11	3	2	3.2	1.0
9	Identifies what he/she considers important	0	6	7	13	8	1	3.7	1.1
10	Encourages class discussion.	0	5	7	11	10	2	3.8	1.1
11	Invites students to share their knowledge and experiences.	1	4	12	11	5	2	3.5	1.0
[12]	Knows if the class is understanding him/her or not	5	8	11	8	2	1	[2.8]	1.2
13	Has students apply concepts to demonstrate understanding	0	4	14	12	1	4	3.3	0.8
14	Shows genuine interest in students	4	5	12	7	4	3	3.1	1.2
~~15~~	~~Gives personal help to students having difficulties in course.~~	~~0~~	~~3~~	~~7~~	~~11~~	~~4~~	~~1~~	~~3.7~~	~~0.9~~
16	Relates to students as individuals	4	4	9	8	6	4	3.3	1.3
17	Is accessible to students out of class	0	6	9	10	4	6	3.4	1.0
[18]	Has an interesting style of presentation	4	7	13	9	1	1	[2.9]	1.1
19	Varies the speed and tone of his/her voice	3	4	16	7	3	2	3.1	1.1
20	Shows interest in and concern for the quality of his/her teaching.	0	2	10	15	7	1	3.7	0.9
[21]	Motivates students to do their best work	1	7	17	8	1	1	[3.0]	0.8
[22]	Gives interesting and stimulating assignments.	4	6	15	8	0	2	[2.8]	1.0
~~23~~	~~Gives examinations permitting students to show understanding~~	~~0~~	~~1~~	~~3~~	~~4~~	~~1~~	~~26~~	~~3.6~~	~~0.9~~
24	Keeps students informed of their progress.	0	4	10	12	1	8	3.4	0.8
	OVERALL RATINGS:	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	Average	Std. Dev
25	Rate the overall teaching effectiveness of this instructor	0	1	9	9	10	6	0	4.3	1.1
26	How worthwhile was this course compared with others at U.C.?	1	2	5	12	10	3	1	4.2	1.3
					[YES]		[NO]		% - YES	% - NO
27	Are you taking this course because it is required?				14		19		40.0%	54.3%

25

/ = OMITTED BY 25% OF CLASS - NOT RELEVANT OR STUDENTS DON'T KNOW

O = TWO MOST DESCRIPTIVE ITEMS

[ ] = FOUR LEAST DESCRIPTIVE ITEMS - TIPs INCLUDED

26

Teaching Improvement Packets (TIPs)

Guide For Their Use

Enclosed is a selected set of Teaching Improvement Packets (TIPs). We have selected TIPs related to the four items that students said were least descriptive of your teaching.

Use

Our suggestion is that you:

1) select the item on your Teacher Description Profile you would most like to change

2) read that Teaching Improvement Packet

3) select one of the ideas that might help you in teaching, or develop a new idea based on those provided

4) try out the idea at your next class meeting

5) tell your students that you are trying out a new idea in your teaching

6) ask your students to evaluate the idea

Whether the first idea you try works well or not, you can repeat the process with additional ideas.

Some faculty have found the enclosed Instructional Improvement Worksheet useful for making notes to themselves about how well different ideas work.

Some faculty have used the worksheet for documenting their systematic efforts undertaken to improve instruction.

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INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT WORKSHEET

(For additional copies xerox this sheet.)

Name _____ _____ Semester, 19__

Date: _____ What I plan to do (Be specific, if you can. Don't be too ambitious):

Date: _____ Rationale (Why do you want to do it? What you hope will happen; what difference will it make?):

Date: _____ Outcomes (How things worked; what changed; what didn't?):

Notes to yourself for next semester:

BE SURE TO USE THIS WORKSHEET TO DOCUMENT YOUR SYSTEMATIC EFFORTS TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION

5/87

Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services (TIES)
U. C. Berkeley

Teaching Idea Packets (TIPs)

No. 12

KNOWING IF THE CLASS IS UNDERSTANDING YOU OR NOT

The following ideas are suggested and used by faculty members at the University of California, Berkeley.

1. Assign "minute papers" at the end of some lectures.

The Physics professor who invented this process says, "Several times during the term - about once a week - I come to class a little early. I write two questions on the board:

1) What's the most significant thing you learned today?

2) What question is uppermost in your mind at the end of today's class session?

"Then, I make my presentation for 49 minutes. One minute before the end of the period, I say to the class, 'Take out a piece of paper. You have one minute to answer these two questions.'

"My students sign the papers and pass them to the center aisle. I pick them up on my way out of class. I give them to my reader to check off the names of those who turn them in.

"Now I read some of the papers. I find I can tell whether I am getting my points across. I can also tell what problems students are having. I clarify difficult points next time we meet.

"I can identify students in trouble early in the term. If a student gives me off-the-wall responses, I invite him/her to come see me. One of the common problems is that a student has the course prerequisites on paper, but not in his/her head.

"Furthermore the 'minute paper' process causes students to listen more actively. All the way along during the class session they are saying to themselves, 'Is this the most significant thing I'm going to learn today!'

"Toward the end of the hour they have to wonder, 'Well, what question <u>is</u> uppermost in my mind at the end of this session.'

"Students' writing improves. Responses I get in the last week of the term are more articulate, and longer than those at the beginning."

2. **Distribute index cards several times during the semester and ask students to give you feedback on the course.**

A professor of Education asks students to respond to two questions, one on the front and one on the back of the index cards. The two questions he uses are, "How's it going?" and, "Any suggestions?"

3. **Videotape a segment of your class.**

Several Berkeley professors have had their classes videotaped. One Zoology professor has had his lectures videotaped many times. "The first time was a shattering experience," he says, "but it is the most effective kind of feedback you can get. I have found videotape invaluable for getting rid of annoying mannerisms, for learning to vary the speed of my delivery and to put more expression and greater clarity into my explanations."

If you want to arrange to have your class videotaped call the Educational Television Office (2-2535). Guidelines for observing a videotape of your teaching are available from TIES (2-6392) or from the Television Office.

4. **Reserve the last 10 minutes of your class for questions.**

A faculty member in the humanities wanted to provide opportunity for student questions during his lectures, but he was concerned that the questions might monopolize class time and take them off the topic. "I decided to reserve the last ten minutes of class for student questions," he says. "I feel better knowing I will not be interrupted. My students feel better knowing they have an opportunity to clarify points they may not have understood."

5. **Give frequent quizzes.**

One excellent science teacher gives students practice quizzes (of 10 to 15 minutes duration) throughout the quarter. "I don't grade the quizzes," he explains, "but I do read them and review material with which a large number of students seem to have difficulty. I also seek out students who are having real problems understanding the material and spend more time with them in my office or in the departmental course center."

6. **Increase the amount of eye-contact you have with your students during your lectures.**

"I look carefully at my students' faces," says one History professor. "You can't teach a bored or confused class. If I see a glazed look which suggests that students are not following me, I interrupt my lecture and say, 'We may be going too fast...,' or 'This point doesn't seem to be clear to some of you...'.

Some faculty members prefer to direct their questions to the entire class; others find it effective to call on students by name, interrupting their lectures to say, "Jerry, you look like you had a question," or "Several of you looked puzzled. Sally, can you tell me what doesn't seem to be clear?"

7. **Call on your students to paraphrase or summarize what you have just said.**

"Asking your students if they understand gets you only so far," one History teacher explains. "Asking Ms. Jones to summarize the main things to remember about X, and then asking other students to help out if she is having difficulty is a far better check on your students' understanding."

Asking questions of specific students has other benefits too. For example, because your students know that they may be called upon, they listen more attentively for the main ideas and that in turn helps them to organize their notes better. Getting your students to summarize periodically also breaks the monotony of a 50-minute lecture.

8. **Attend or lead lab or discussion sections yourself.**

Several faculty report that they always lead one lab or discussion group themselves so that they have firsthand knowledge of how the course is going.

"My students vary considerably in their command of prerequisite subject matter in this course," one faculty member explains. "It's a tough course and the chief task is to find out as soon as possible who is going to have trouble and to give them help early on. I can't always depend on the TAs to let me know. Also the atmosphere in the biological sciences is so fiercely competitive, many of my students try to hide their weaknesses until it is too late for me to help them."

9. **Encourage your students to form small study groups and send representatives to see you about difficulties their groups are having.**

One humanities teacher who does this says, "Although I encourage my students to come see me about problems they are having with my course, freshmen are often loathe to do that. By encouraging them to form study groups, I am trying to help them get to know at least some of their fellow students and to take advantage of what they can learn from one another. Also, it seems to be easier for some students to come to me for assistance if they 'represent' a group, because the problems are then seen as common to many students not just the group's representative. Faculty members can be very intimidating for some freshmen, even those of us who try very hard not to be. Also, many of these students were at the top of their high school classes and it is difficult for them to adjust to the competition at Berkeley. While it is difficult for them to admit that they don't understand some-thing, there is a certain comfort in knowing that some of their fellow students are in the same boat and that by joining forces they can help one another."

10. **Schedule an individual appointment with each student.**

A Statistics professor felt that he was not being successful in generating class discussion. At the end of the third week, still unable to encourage class participation, he decided to pass around a sheet of paper with a list of 10-minute blocks of time when he would be available for individual appointments.

Each of his students was required to sign up for one of the 10 minute appointments. They were told that the chief purpose was for him to get to know his students better and to listen to any complaints or suggestions they might have.

"I found that this was a real ice-breaker," he explains. "Even though most of our discussions were mainly chit-chat, some of my students used the opportunity to indicate problems they were having in the course or to make suggestions about course improvements. Perhaps the chief benefit was that it gave me an opportunity to get to know my students. As a result, they seemed to feel more comfortable asking and answering questions in class.

Adapted from ABC's of Teaching with Excellence, B. G. Davis, L. Wood and R. Wilson Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services, University of California, 1983.
These suggestions relate to Student Description of Teaching Item 12, 1986 form.

7/86

Teaching Innovation and
Evaluation Services (TIES)
U. C. Berkeley

Teaching Idea Packets (TIPs)

No. 18

HAVING AN INTERESTING STYLE OF PRESENTATION

The following ideas are suggested and used by faculty members at the University of California, Berkeley.

1. **Focus on five or six different students each day and give your lecture as if you were talking to them individually.**

   Many speech teachers encourage people to think of a lecture as an enlarged or public conversation. Several excellent lecturers told us that they lecture to a large class (50-200 students) in the same way they talk to a few students.

   "By focusing on a few students, I am more relaxed and informal. This helps me to concentrate more on the ideas I want to convey than the impression I may be making," one teacher said. "I think that, as a result, I speak with more expression and conviction."

2. **Exaggerate everything about your presentation in a large auditorium class.**

   A professor of Economics believes that physical exaggeration and a bit of hyperbole are keys to success in lecturing in a very large auditorium. "You have to remember that 800 students constitutes an audience, not a class in the normal sense," he points out.

   "In front of a very large audience, everything you would do in lecturing to a class of 30 or even 100 looks small, stiff, and formal. You have to exaggerate everything, make it all 'larger than life,' if you want to capture an audience.

   "In our very large introductory course, I stride the stage with long steps, I make sweeping gestures, I ask broad rhetorical questions and make ridiculous puns, I pound the lectern and raise and lower my voice, and I make frequent use of simple graphs projected on a movie-size screen.

   "In my smaller classes, of course, I do none of these. A teacher can get away with gross generalizations in a very large lecture setting; in fact, exaggerations can even enhance student learning in that environment. Students know the difference, and they appreciate a teacher's adaptation of pedagogical style to different settings."

3. Look for ways to relate the course material as a story.

"I always try to tell some kind of story," says a teacher in the biological sciences. "My primary belief about communication is that it doesn't matter what you say if you can't get them to listen."

In describing his preparation for a lecture for a large class he says, "Because I already know the material very well, most of the preparation goes on in my head for several days. Then, the night before I begin to concentrate on it very intensely; it's a little like the 'psyching yourself up' that actors or football players describe before a performance or a big game. Then I begin to outline the lecture, focusing on the major points and how they might be told as a story."

4. Vary the pace and type of instructional activities in a course.

One excellent teacher says that he conducts each class meeting differently "to keep my students off balance. Students always know what topic will be covered in a given session," he says, "but they don't always know how it will be handled."

An English teacher also believes that his wide variety of teaching strategies accounts for his high ratings on interesting style of presentation. "I read whatever I can find on teaching in my discipline," he says, "and I borrow shamelessly from other instructors when it comes to pedagogical strategies."

Some of the variations used by excellent teachers include: student panel discussions, guest speakers, slides, films, overhead transparencies, blackboard work with colored chalk, role-playing and simulations, and a wide variety of group discussion techniques.

5. Begin your lecture with a "joke of the week," especially in large early Monday morning classes.

One faculty member admits that his jokes are pretty bad, but finds that his students appreciate his efforts anyway. "I hate Mondays and I hate early mornings even more," he explains. "A joke related to the course content, to education, or to life in general tends to help get everyone awake," he says.

The source of his jokes? "One source is the students themselves," he says. "I encourage students to bring me jokes I can use. In that way my 'bad' jokes are their 'bad' jokes as well."

6. **Invite guest speakers to your course.**

An English professor sometimes invites professional actors to talk about their interpretation of a scene or a role from a play his students are studying. "It's very important to make clear to a guest what you expect of him or her in order to ensure that it is an educational experience for your students," he points out.

"I always take detailed notes during a guest lecture," says a professor in biological sciences. "In this way I am able to answer student questions about the material during later sessions and may learn something new myself!"

An Architecture professor prepares his guest speakers well in advance so that they know exactly what is expected of them. "Practicing architects are asked to submit working drawings, models, photos, and publications on one of their buildings so that my students can be well acquainted with their work beforehand," he says.

"Students are asked to submit a set of questions to a guest speaker beforehand about his/her work. Designated students are given responsibility to see that these questions are addressed to the speaker." He makes a point to confirm the time and place of the guest's presentation, provide a map of the campus, arrange for campus parking, and promptly send each speaker a thank-you letter.

7. **Focus your lectures around a common object, event, or phenomenon which exemplifies the major concepts of the course.**

A faculty member in the Biological Sciences calls this his "potato lecture." "Biology is an empirical discipline; it depends on observation and investigation. I pass out potatoes to all 700 students in the class and begin a Socratic dialogue about the kinds of things they can observe about their potato. I have to overcome their previous experiences," he explains. "Although potatoes are familiar objects to them, they don't have the foggiest idea what a potato is. I stress what you can get out of everyday experiences by asking the right questions. I poll them on their observations, help them ask questions and describe ways they could investigate answers."

An interactive exercise around a common phenomenon tends to "break the ice" between faculty and students even in a large lecture course.

"After the lecture, some students cook their potatoes and others plant them. Months later, I still get stopped by students who want to tell me how their potatoes are doing," he says.

8. **Begin class with an incident, example, or anecdote to get your students' attention.**

A faculty member in History says that he often begins by reading aloud a short passage from a primary source or a story to illustrate his major theme or point in the lecture. "For example, I start out by stating that the Wizard of Oz is a parable for progressivism and read passages from it to illustrate my major thesis. I then get my students to help identify the different characters and what they represent.

"I usually end with a quotation that pulls together what I have been trying to say," he says. "Also, whenever possible, I try to link the past with current events, to show how the topic is important for the present."

9. **"Open with gusto" and "Finish strong."**

Professor Otis Lancaster of the University of Pennsylvania points out the advantages of giving special thought to beginning and ending each lecture.

"The opening should secure students' attention and give them the desired mental set. Get off to a good start. Do something to command attention from the outset. Put punch into your opening.

"Have some form of attention-getter....a gadget or piece of hardware whose operation depends upon the principles of the day's lesson usually excites attention. Carefully planned questions or statements can also develop the curiosity necessary to get students' attention.

"Action is always an attention-getter. If you intend to use charts or models for demonstration, have these carried to the front of the class after students are assembled; or keep charts covered until class starts. This will usually whet students' curiosity and make them eager to see what is going to happen.

"The ending is as important as the beginning. Don't let a class session fade into nonexistence. Make an impressive ending. For example, end with: a question for the class to cogitate and answer before next meeting; a quotation conveying the essential theme; a summary; a miniature review (keep it brief); or what to do before the next class." (Lancaster, Otis E., Effective Teaching and Learning, N. Y.: Gordon and Breach, 1974, pp. 122-24.)

Adapted from ABC's of Teaching with Excellence, B. G. Davis, L. Wood and R. Wilson Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services, University of California, 1983.
These suggestions relate to Student Description of Teaching Item 18, 1986 form.

Teaching Innovation and
Evaluation Services (TIES)
U. C. Berkeley

Teaching Idea Packets (TIPs)

No. 21

MOTIVATING STUDENTS TO DO THEIR BEST WORK

The following ideas are suggested and used by faculty members at the University of California, Berkeley.

1. Make personal contact with individual students.

"In motivating my students to do their best work, I have found no substitute for personal contact with individual students," says a Business Administration faculty member. "Such personal contact is a natural part of a small, year-long seminar, but I have to resort to short-cuts to establish a measure of contact with individual students in large classes." To increase opportunities for personal contact he employs a variety of techniques:

- a voluntary questionnaire on the personal and educational backgrounds of members of my class. "This survey has proved useful in identifying students with special expertise to draw on during discussions."
- a mandatory visit by each of his student to his office hours. "I try to schedule this around approval of their research project."
- a thoughtful evaluation of your students' written work. "I have come to realize that evaluating students' written work provides the most direct opportunity for one-to-one communication. I spend a great deal of time commenting on papers, emphasizing how to improve their performance."

2. Model your own high standards for your students.

"If you do a sloppy job, you can't expect your students to do a good one," one History professor explains. "I point out to my students that I put in several hours preparation out-side of class and I expect them to do the same. After all, I already know the material. If it takes me several hours to review it to do my best, certainly my students can't expect to do less and still do well in the course."

An Economics professor concurs, saying, "If I work hard preparing and am excited about the course, then my students are too."

3. **Orient new students to faculty expectations for student performance and the resources available to assist them with problems they may have.**

One humanities teacher does this every Fall in his introductory level course taken primarily by freshmen and transfer students. "Because most of the new students feel quite lost at the University," he explains, "I take time at the beginning of a course to explain how courses work at Berkeley and to relate a number of anecdotes that let them know that any feelings of strangeness they may be experiencing are also felt by others."

"I tell them where the major tutorial, counseling, and advising services are and invite them to come see me if they are having difficulties."

Note: The TIES office produced a Faculty Guide to Instructional Resources, the last section of which describes the various campus resources available to your students who need help with academic or personal problems. Contact TIES: 642-6392.

4. **Emphasize how to learn from one's mistakes.**

A Biochemistry professor, for example, points out that the date in student laboratory reports can easily be faked; therefore his main concern is that his students understand why their experimental results failed and not that they get the right results. "If my students can analyze and explain why their results failed," he says, "I give them full credit for their lab reports. I emphasize that everyone makes mistakes; what is important is to learn how to profit from them."

A professor of English says, "I try to set a tone in which my students can readily admit that something went wrong in their bibliographic search. The course focuses on mastering a methodology and a range of bibliographic skills. I encourage my students to tell other students about their mistakes and explore the reasons for them with the group rather than masking those mistakes.

5. **Individualize instruction as much as possible.**

A professor of Physics explains that he first gets to know his students as individuals, then he focuses on their weak points (excessive shyness, lack of confidence, aggressive over-confidence, etc.) "Then I begin to draw them out individually to help them overcome those weaknesses," he says.

"For example, I might challenge a smart-aleck student with a question he can't answer, and then help him find a way of researching or solving the problem. With a shy student, I might start out by asking him to walk back to the office with me to loan him a book I think will be of interest, or I might ask him to go to the library and look up something for me. Once he is in my office, I may ask him to work out a problem on the blackboard and discuss it with me orally, and then gradually convince him to make a presentation in front of my class.

"Most students are either afraid of faculty members or tend to think that we only like A+ students. In fact, some A+ students are a bore and some C students are very interesting and engaging people. More importantly, some C students are really A or B students, if only someone takes the time to work with them, to help them correct bad study habits or faulty problem-solving techniques and gain self-confidence."

6. **Hold an outside review session once every two weeks.**

An Ethnic Studies professor who teaches a large introductory course holds voluntary discussion sessions on a regular basis to review the material and answer his students' questions. The session is held in a smaller room immediately following his lecture when his students are most likely to have questions. There is no set agenda for the session. The teacher simply fields students' questions and stimulates discussion of important concepts and ideas. He has found that between 20 and 50 of his students attend each session (out of an enrollment of 350). The sessions, besides being worthwhile for his students, give the professor an opportunity to get to know his students and their concerns.

7. **Give a "mini-lecture" on how to write a paper or respond to an essay question.**

Several excellent teachers do this routinely in their courses. "I impress upon my students that History is a literate discipline," says one teacher. "I encourage them to respect their own research and ideas enough to organize them in some logical and coherent fashion before they start to write. I point out that I work hard at organizing and outlining my lectures, and I expect them to do the same for me."

A Zoology professor says that he gives his students a "sermonette" on the importance of good writing. "I give them a twenty-minute essay quiz bi-weekly, and take off a few points for incomplete sentences, poor grammar, etc. Spelling, however, I have to ignore," he concludes, "or no one would have any points left!"

The TIES office has available a guide to composition resources which describes ways of improving your students' writing skills. Contact TIES: 642-6392.

8. **Give a mini-lecture on how to read a book most efficiently.**

Mini-lectures of this kind are especially helpful in lower division courses and in courses where the readings are difficult classics or works not originally written for students. An English teacher does this in his upper division literature courses as well.

"I discovered several years ago," he says, "that most of my students really don't know how to read a book. It seems like such a simple thing to a faculty member. The sheer volume of our reading forces us to learn a lot of time-saving devices one way or another. Undergraduates, on the other hand, tend to approach a book in a linear fashion, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph from beginning to end."

"Now, in many of my courses, I include a mini-lecture on how to read various kinds of books; how to use a table of contents, an index, how to skim the beginning and ends of chapters, how to identify the main points, how to take notes, and how to tell whether a book is worth reading or not."

Adapted from ABC's of Teaching with Excellence, B. G. Davis, L. Wood and R. Wilson Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services, University of California, 1983.
These suggestions relate to Student Description of Teaching Item 21, 1986 form.

7/86

Teaching Innovation and
Evaluation Services (TIES)
U. C. Berkeley

Teaching Idea Packets (TIPs)

No. 22

GIVING INTERESTING AND STIMULATING ASSIGNMENTS

The following ideas are suggested and used by faculty members at the University of California, Berkeley.

1. **Give a brief early assignment that allows your students to build on knowledge and skills acquired in previous courses.**

   One professor of Architecture does this in his studio courses. "Beginning with a problem that my students can easily master increases their self-confidence and creates a relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere for the course," he explains. "My first assignment always calls for my students to use skills learned in prior courses and to apply them to an elementary design problem."

2. **Give your students at least one assignment which consists of several options.**

   One professor of English requires every student to write two essays on assigned topics. His third assignment, however, sets forth five or six options from which his students may choose the one which sounds interesting and most allows them to do their best.

   Examples of the options which he offers include: a piece of creative writing; a dramatic representation to be performed in front of the class (which can be a small group or team project); an original videotape to be shown to the class (which can also be a team effort); or a third essay (a "safe" option generally selected by his more conventional students). In addition, with his permission, students can create an option of their own if they wish.

   "More than five or six options tends to confuse some students; it becomes too difficult to decide," he believes. "Two few options, on the other hand, restricts unduly my more creative and daring students." Although optional assignments must be related to the subject matter of the course, he encourages his students to take an interdisciplinary approach and to link content and skills from other courses.

3. **Give your students the choice of substituting a paper for one of your midterms.**

A professor of Classics gives two midterms and one final exam. He has found it useful to give his students the option of writing a paper (from an approved list of topics) for either of the midterms.

"I haven't really noticed any pattern of who takes the midterm and who writes a paper," he comments. "Good and poor students do both. In general about 25% of the class chooses to write a paper." He finds that giving his students options increases their motivation and makes them more active learners.

4. **Create opportunities for role playing.**

An Engineering professor makes use of role playing to encourage his students to develop skills they will need in their careers. "I give my students copies of an Engineering report, for example. Then one half of the class is asked to assume the role of the authors of that report and prepare an oral presentation for the client or funding agency. The other half of the class is assigned to act as representatives of the client or funding agency and to prepare questions to be asked of the engineers.

"About a week later, during class time, I select certain students to actually enact these roles in front of the class. My students do not know ahead of time who will be called upon, so everyone has to be prepared. Those not called on join me in the role of the observer. When the students have enacted the meeting, the rest of us give a critique of each side's performance."

5. **Assign provocative or controversial topics for papers.**

"I find that the quality of the papers I get often depends on the quality of the assignment I give," says a professor of Business Administration. He tries to give provocative topics as paper assignments.

For example, in a recent assignment he asked his students to respond to the question, "If you were working in a company that illegally pollutes the environment what would you do and why?" Giving provocative assignments not only challenges his students and makes for more interesting reading but also diminishes the chance that the papers will be plagiarized.

6. **Use a structured process to help your students choose topics and groups.**

In one Public Health class, students work in small groups on a major project throughout the term. The professor has developed procedures to help his students choose topics and groups. First, all possible project ideas are listed on the board using a brainstorming technique. The question posed to students is "What topics or areas would you like to explore?"

Enough topics are generated so that each is taken on by a group of four to six students. The small groups meet around their selected topic of interest and students explore in detail the nature of their project. At the end of the first period, students indicate on an index card their name, address, phone number, group and whether their decision is firm. This list is typed and distributed at the next class meeting when needed changes are made.

This procedure gives students a chance to identify appropriate topics and explore in preliminary fashion how they might proceed. It gets students working on their term projects early and has the added benefit of providing each student with a list of everyone in the class and their project interests.

7. **Set up student panels.**

One faculty member in the social sciences organizes the term as a series of student-led discussions. "I believe my students can teach themselves a great deal; therefore I do not play an active role in the student-led discussions. My role is to serve as organizer and facilitator.

In the first week his students select the topic and the date of their presentation. Generally, there are three to four students per topic. Outside class, his students meet as groups with the faculty member to discuss how to organize their topics for presentation and discusssion. It is up to each student group to select whatever format they wish for their presentation.

"In the past, student groups have conducted a debate, performed a skit, or simply led a discussion about the topic," he says. "They learn a lot about the topic and they really get to know one another while preparing their presentations.

8. **Ask students to analyze an essay or journal article and to write a critique of it.**

One professor of English assigns the work of a literary critic and then asks his students to write an essay taking an adversary position. "If my assignments are provocative," he says, "I get better results. I stress the importance of their presenting a personal point of view. They should enjoy doing the paper; it should provide them with a personal learning experience."

A Psychology professor asks his students to write an evaluation or critique of a paper by a professional psychologist. "The process of analysis and evaluation captures what I am trying to do in the course," he explains.

9. **Give assignments which put your students in the role of another.**

A History professor reports that she used to give rather standard writing assignments, e. g., "compare author X and Y's views on A," where the two authors tended to be professional historians. "Most undergraduates, however, find the arguments of current historians somewhat arcane," she says.

"Therefore, most recently I have asked my students to read a collection of the 18th century speeches on why Louis XVI should be killed and assigned them the task of writing their own speech as if they had been living during the French Revolution.

"Undergraduates really are enthusiastic about this kind of assignment and do an incredibly good job. It helps them to identify with the issues of the time; in fact many of my students went to great lengths to research the authenticity of their own empathic interpretations. Next year, I intend to take this assignment a step further by dividing my students into small groups and having them actually deliver their speeches to the group."

Adapted from ABC's of Teaching with Excellence, B. G. Davis, L. Wood and R. Wilson Teaching Innovation and Evaluation Services, University of California, 1983. These suggestions relate to Student Description of Teaching Item 22, 1986 form.

7/86

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